



NEWS RELEASE

*Office of the
United States Attorney
for the
District of Nebraska*
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February 4, 2009

United States Attorney Joe Stecher and the FBI announce the following information for the attention of the media:

Event Triggering this Release: On February 4, 2009, Senior United States District Court Judge Lyle E. Strom sentenced Cecelia D. Earth to twelve months and one day imprisonment to be followed by three years of supervised release for her conviction of theft of public money and making false statements to a government agency. In addition to the imprisonment, Earth was required to forfeit a 2005 Buick Rendezvous CX automobile she purchased with embezzled funds and she was further ordered to pay restitution to the Health Resources & Service Administration in the amount of \$83,224.00.

In 2002, Earth was the executive director of the Nee Shoch Ha Chee Community Development Corporation, a non-profit corporation formed by the Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska. She was also the director of AiKiRuti, a subdivision of Nee Shoch Ha Chee Community Development Corporation. Earth applied to the Health Resources & Service Administration for a grant to help build a facility for AiKiRuti. The grant was approved with the condition that private funds be raised to help build the facility. As the private funds were never obtained, the project was not started and the grant funds were not dispursed.

In 2007 Earth was notified by the agency that the grant would be terminated if the funds were not used by the end of 2007. Earth advised the agency that the construction of the facility was not feasible. However, she asked for permission to buy \$134,000 worth of equipment instead. The equipment list included a commercial size dishwasher and range, several big screen televisions, a van, a John Deere mower, a teepee, and miscellaneous other items. Eventually the agency approved the purchase of \$83,224 worth of equipment.

The agency wired the \$83,224 to a bank account controlled by Earth. Thereafter, Earth withdrew all of the funds and used them for her own personal purposes without purchasing any of the designated equipment. At the time of sentencing, Earth admitted to the Court that she had embezzled the money and had used it to support her gambling addiction.

Name of Defendant: Cecelia D. Earth, age 55

AKA:

Crime(s) Charged and Potential Penalty: Earth was charged with theft of public money in violation of 18 U.S.C. §641 which carries a statutory maximum penalty of ten years of imprisonment and/or a \$250,000 fine and three years of supervised release. She was also charged with making false statements to a government agency in violation of 18 U.S.C. §1001 which carries a statutory maximum of five years of imprisonment and/or a \$250,000 fine, and three years of supervised release.

Specific Location of Alleged Crime: Winnebago, Nebraska

Location of Arrest: Earth appeared pursuant to a summons in lieu of arrest

Alleged Dollar Loss/Type and Quantity of Drug: \$83,224

Others Charged in Same Scheme:

Relevant Dates:

Date of Alleged Crime: October 1, 2007 through January 15, 2008

Federal Arrest Date: a summons was issued in lieu of arrest

Date Complaint Issued:

Indictment Returned Date: 2/21/2008

Initial Appearance Date: March 20, 2008

Plea or Trial and Date(s): November 6, 2008

Sentencing Date: February 4, 2008

Next Court Hearing Type and Date:

Assigned Magistrate Judge: Honorable Thomas D. Thalken

Held without Bond, or Released from Custody: released from custody

Assigned District Court Judge: Honorable Lyle E. Strom

Initials of Assigned AUSA/Preparer of THIS Release: DRS